



[Home](#)

[News](#)
[Business](#)
[Columns](#)
[Classifieds](#)
[Health](#)
[Northern Living](#)
[Obituaries](#)
[Opinion](#)
[Sports](#)
[Weather](#)



[Site Map](#)
[Search our Archives](#)

[Advertisers](#)

[Suggest this article to someone](#)

[Printer-friendly version of this story](#)



November 16, 2003

Village pushes for new wetlands fill

Project predates adjacent stalled developments

By [KEITH MATHENY](#)
Record-Eagle staff writer

ELK RAPIDS - Another controversial wetlands fill is being proposed a few hundred yards from Lake Michigan - this time by village officials.

The village has filed for a permit from the state Department of Environmental Quality to fill almost nine acres of wetlands with nearly 28,000 cubic yards of material south of First Street between Ash and Pine streets.

The permit application was filed by the village and private lot owners. It is part of a larger plan to extend Pine, Spruce, Elm and Ash streets south of Third Street, construct water and sewer lines, and add a stormwater management system to the area, including detention basins.

Village president Joseph Yuchasz said the project pre-dates two adjacent housing developments called The Preserve and Capa Bran.

Those projects have been stalled for nearly two years, after the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers ruled they impacted wetlands that are connected to Lake Michigan and under federal jurisdiction. The Army Corps ruling differed from one earlier made by the DEQ that wetlands filling permits were not necessary in the area.

Elk Rapids resident Greg Reisig questioned the village's plans.

"It's puzzling to me why the village would want to move ahead with a permit like that, until the major issues with the wetlands at The Preserve and Capa Bran are resolved," he said. "It's all connected. It's all one wetlands system."

The village's DEQ permit is also under review by the Army Corps, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the federal Environmental Protection Agency.

Christopher Grobbel, land use program director for the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council, slammed the village's request as "very poorly conceived." He noted that state environmental law requires an applicant to try to avoid harming wetlands and to minimize any wetlands impacts that must occur.

"The village proposed none of those things," he said. "It was a pretty straightforward failure on their part to comply with the minimum requirements of the law."

Wetlands are important, environmentalists say, because they provide stormwater and erosion protection, unique wildlife habitat, and their filtration directly affects the water quality of connected lakes, rivers or streams.

Yuchasz said filing a joint permit with private lot owners allows the village to more comprehensively deal with stormwater, water and sewer extension, and other issues, rather than to address them lot by lot.

Problems with stormwater are well documented in that area of the village, and pre-date both the Preserve and Capa Bran developments, Yuchasz said.

"The number one reason we have this application in front of the DEQ and the Army Corps of Engineers is to find out what we can and cannot do," he said. "The stormwater problem will not go away by itself."

Grobbel questioned that approach, saying the village's master plan and zoning should promote preservation of sensitive environmental areas, "not flaunt the law and say, 'Tell us no.' "

Martin Jannereth, the DEQ's Great Lakes shorelands section chief, said a DEQ field officer is compiling information about the area. Requests for a public hearing on the village's proposal will be considered within the next week or two, and the Army Corps may yet take jurisdiction as it did with the adjacent, stalled housing developments, he said.

THERE'S MORE THAN JUST THE HEADLINES

The Record-Eagle offers more news, info, advertising and updates in print than what is published online. [Subscribe](#) today and get more.

[Return to \[www.record-eagle.com\]\(http://www.record-eagle.com\) home page](#)

Send questions and comments to: [webmaster\[at\]record-eagle.com](mailto:webmaster[at]record-eagle.com)

Copyright © The [Traverse City Record-Eagle](#). All rights reserved.